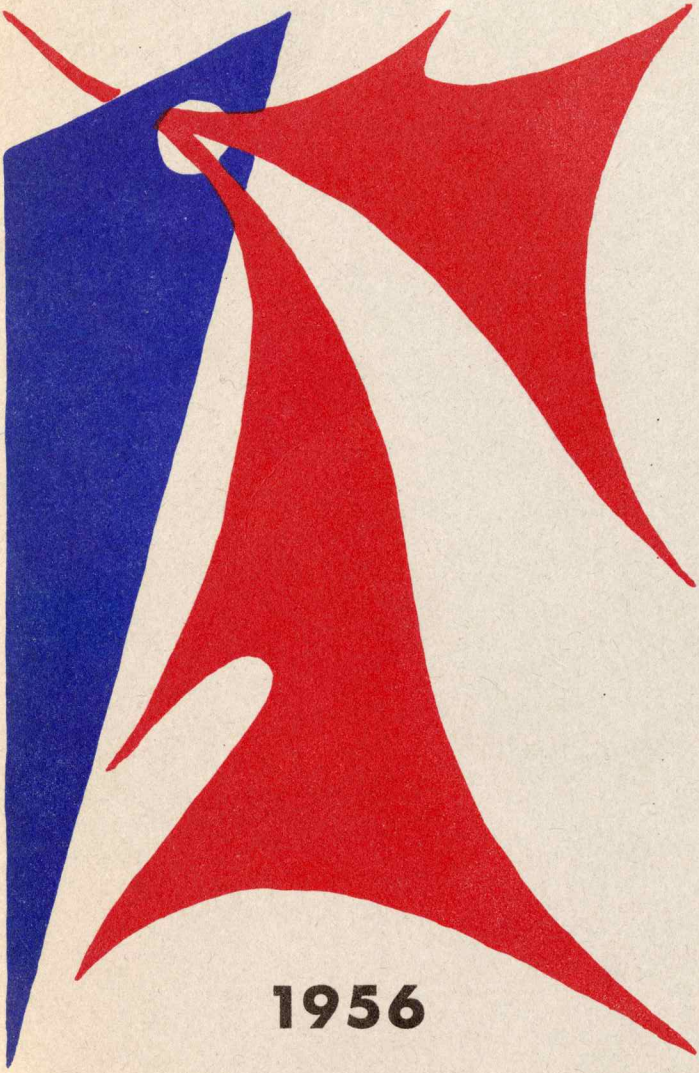

prism

1956

SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS COLLEGE

prism

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CONTENTS

Editorial 7

POETRY:

ANCIENT MUSIC 10 hadashi

A BAFFLING SCHISM 11 george holmes

THE APPLE BEARERS 12 hadashi

TWO POEMS 14 w. h. rice

POST MORTEM 15 martin levut

DAWN 16 p. eric

A GENERALITY MISCONSTRUED 17 t. abramovitch

POEM 18 martin levut

ART:

ART AND POETRY 20 p. frei

PROSE:

THE CROSS IS BENT	26	h. d. clarke
RELEASE	32	joseph fox
OFFSPRING	36	anonymous
THE FALL OF GLOUCESTER	39	t. a reisner
THE NINTH OF MAY	46	p. eric
REFLECTIONS ON A COMMUTER	49	peter dyce
THE NIGHT IS LONG	53	alex frith
THE CONQUEST	58	a. whittall
THE EVENING BELLS	61	a. n. p.

EDITORIAL

The arts are divided into two main categories; those which are useful or mechanic (i.e., the trades) and those which are liberal or polite. It is this latter category in which PRISM interests itself. The liberal or polite arts are those in which the mind and/or the imagination play the predominant role.

PRISM is pleased to be able to present three of man's most expressive art forms—poetry, painting and prose. This literary magazine represents the end-product of a campaign to single out the latent artistic responses among students of Sir George Williams College in Montreal.

Artistic expression whether it be poetry, music, painting or prose is but a betrayal of one's inner self. The mind is the central core of one's artistic being. Here the conception and birth of the ideas are originated and motivated. The idea is nurtured carefully until it assumes form. Once it is clearly formed the delicate matter of interpretation enters the scene. This is perhaps the most difficult of all the stages. Interpretation itself is based almost solely upon the personal taste of the individual and the effusive will. The touch which marks the sensitive interpretation is quickly recognized and assumes an almost classic style which elevates the idea considerably. Once the interpretation has been decided upon the idea is ready to be placed before one's fellow mortals for critical appraisal and judgement. This is the battleground for art. Here it is subjected to silent appreciation or damning vilification. Critics range from one extreme to the other—from the academician to the man in the street. No matter how the criticisms are made—favourably or otherwise—the artist will always reign supreme for this reason—"This represents an integral part of me". This can neither be challenged nor changed. It is immutable. Art becomes not for art's sake but for the artist's sake.

During this troubled part of the 20th century, man has often turned to the beauty of expression for comfort and solace. During the darkest days of World War II, Britain and the world were entranced and even spurred on to greater efforts by the majestic oratory of the British War Time Prime Minister. The one difficulty of our time which has been so ably pointed out by the recent Massey Commission on Arts, Letters and Sciences is the noticeable absence of facilities wherby artistic works can be published or displayed. This is rather painfully apparent in our own fair metropolis where the existence of a new concert hall would not be regarded as a dream come true but rather as a miracle.

Here at Sir George Williams College interest in the arts has been very gratifying. The student response towards "PRISM" this year has been most enthusiastic. If such enthusiasm is continued, the day is not far off where publication of this magazine will become bi-annual. This year the reader will notice the addition of an art section—a long awaited feature which I hope will see even greater expansion in future years. I sincerely hope that in some small way students at Sir George have provided the reader with a measure of enjoyment with the issuance of this magazine.

IAIN C. S. MACNAB

POETRY
EJS

hadashi
(c. j. newman)

ANCIENT MUSIC

HOW SLOW the poplars in the sun,
across whose roots green waters run:
how slow, how slow the heat of day—
soft poetry makes shadows play
along the wall across the hedge
where paradisiac thoughts are lodged:

"Come live with me
and be my lute:
and we will wander,
happy-mute.
Upon a strange earth
singers
of strange songs."

But lying by the bloodred
oak deceived me and I bled
uncoloured water and the sun
exposed, when we two intertwined, one
shadow; You alone were there.
You alone are lyric flesh, and I
am lonely air.

george holmes

A BAFFLING SCHISM

"WAIT!" I cried . . .
The crest of swell heaved
to catch
a trough of moonlight
slimmering by.

All aspens
freely press into the sky
tho'
the two
are unlike each other.

Earth and sky,
an eternal togetherness
where
man and woman
so often walk alone.

How awkward
this simple thing of darkness
unwitting foil
to nimble spirit,
that heartless jester.

When I turn to dust,
whisk me
to moonlit sea
if perhaps
you relent,

and a moment ere I sink
from restless crest,
flick some offering
so I may gnaw at leisure
some part of you in my den.

hadashi
(c. j. newman)

THE APPLE BEARERS

FEIGNING A MOMENT'S uncertainty, see
how they come now, cantering: the
maidens mysterious! They
seem hardly to know
the design
with which their bodies
jewelled blemishes
adorn
our famished eyes.

Liquid marble,

they move
shadowless
on long, cool grass.

Ah the promise
of their posturing
dual ponies — observe
the supple slowmotion as they
curve
the quiet air
to copying their movements
of ecstatic music. They perform
the calisthenics of desire, confusing
music, perfume and desire, till the air
about turns blue and agitated fire.

Avoid them! oh you young, brown
forest gods; for despite
their seeming nakedness, they harbour
secret hollows of incestuous
delight. And if, presuming
by your purity to trace
the patterns of their innocence, you chase
their effortless emotion, you
will number yourselves
among others who
have tumbled
on the odours of their ecstasy.

w. h. rice

TWO POEMS

Autumn: 1955

Shining —
(I watch)
The Starlings
With dawn wings glinting
Flurry up from fall field
Rustling with morning breath.
New sky old
From summer's tail feathers
Stolen colours
flung . . .

January 17, 1956

The days of my anger
Ended
With
spectre steps at low tolling
Gone:
Relief —
The rain with little drops
Humbles
And I
Left with empty hand
Have cracked my darkness
With a smile:
It is pleasant.

martin levut

POST-MORTEM

In a cold room
candle lit
the old man sat
quite still
in a red plush chair

Dressed in a black suit
he sat
Skeleton thin
in his black suit
he sat

And out of his eyes like skinless grapes
he saw Christ on his cross
in the center of the room

He saw Christ nailed to his cross
the wood bloodstained and wormy
the nails rusty from his blood
his skin yellow
his beard frayed
his crown of thorns on his skull-like head

and seeing this
the old man moved in his red plush chair
opened his mouth
spread his purple lips
and laughed
a dry lungless laugh
and laughed
and his brown gums were exposed
and his old man's body shook in his red plush chair
and out of eyes like skinless grapes
he saw Christ smile.

p. eric

DAWN

Squashed tube of prussian green
a jar of sticky brushes
turpentine spilt on a half finished canvas.

Scraps of dogeared paper
chewed pencil stuck through a card
a few words scrawled on a sheet.

Disgust and a sleeping cat.

tevia abramovitch

A GENERALITY MISCONSTRUED

"Timing, my boy, is the most important thing in life,"
Said the casual voice at the centre of the whirlpool.

The outer fringes of the whirlpool
Caught up the vibrations and
Echoed affirmingly:
"Timing is most important . . .
Timing is most important . . ."

Trapped in the vortex
I struggled dissentingly:
"That all matter occupies space in time
is basic.
That all life moves and operates in time
is also basic.
But conscious timing
Is not the essence, but
A secondary, sociological
Factor of existence . . . "

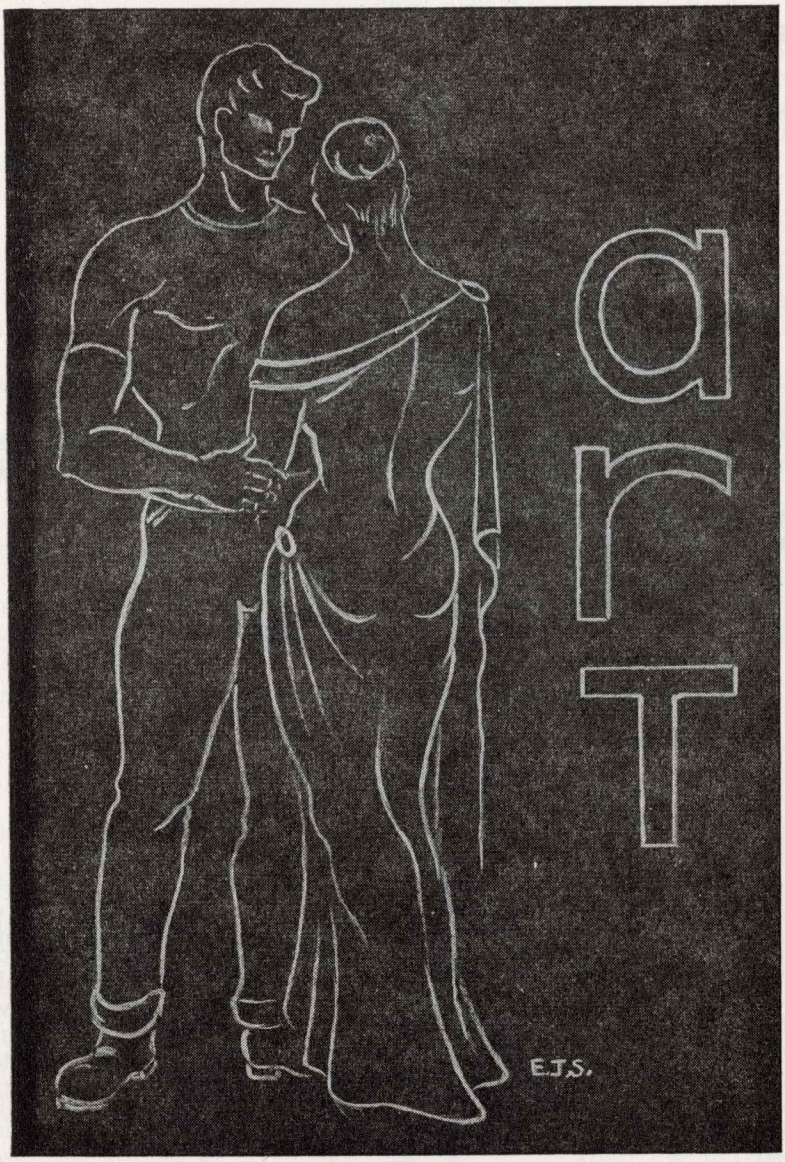
I struggled in vain—
In ever-tightening circles
I was whirled to the centre
and drowned . . .

martin levut

POEM

On the day of the toadstools,
Stripped and twisted trees
With manyfingered branches
Reached out to the red-streaked dayblack,
While Cupid killed doves
On the sky's floor
And painted his wings with blood . . .

Much later
When the fires had run out of food,
And after
The earth had cooled,
The rivers flowed again
And some grass grew
And spring came again to the land.


art
E.J.S.

p. frei

ART AND POETRY

If in a state of complete blankness the two words, art and poetry were suddenly fired into the mechanism of the brain, the cameras of the memory would flash a succession of images onto the screen of the conscious mind—perhaps Gaugin's sultry "Mother and Child" side by side with Keats':

> "I was taught in paradise
> to ease my breast on melodies . . . . "

or, it might be an aseptic modern "art-in-daily-living" model house and the septic:

> " . . . . a rat crept slowly through the vegetation
> dragging its slimy belly on the bank . . . . "

of T. S. Eliot.

Some of us might even have experienced that strange tension inside before the idea of a poem is born; or these two words might evoke revulsion you felt when recalling that sketch or painting which haunted your dreams last night. The words can also conjure up the never-ending: What does the poem mean . . . ? Explain the significance of the cave in Kubla Khan . . . . Why are the seas rotting in the Ancient Mariner . . . . ? Discuss Michael Angelo's mastery of the anatomic form . . . . paraphrase . . . . paraphrase . . . . summarize . . . . Who said . . . . ?

You can feel the brain reel, revolve, and react under this impact. Then the kaleidoscope ceases to move, the jigsaw puzzle pieces begin to fit themselves into their pre-cut meanders. Your mind is trained to order and arrange these random flashes into two groups: Art and Poetry.

Yet, are they really two unlike things? Where does their origin lie? What is it that prompts a man to write a poem or paint a picture? Money? Sometimes yes, but very, very seldom. Spare time? Prestige? No, no, they alone will not produce poems or paintings. They may produce verse or pictures—no more. But remember that night when the image of the fleeting smile was all around you and you could not sleep? A similar image produced the Mona Lisa. No, not image alone; but it had to be there to become a living part of the mind before the oil and the brush could change a canvas to a painting under Da Vinci's hands.

Or, do you remmebr the time when you stood at the corner of a busy intersection in the dank November drizzle? The crowd seemed to lose all human characteristics and move like some lifeless, shapeless thing. Even when you stood right in the midst of this ceaselessly undulating mass, impersonal and tragic—you still could not distinguish its features. A crowd like that evoked such lines as:

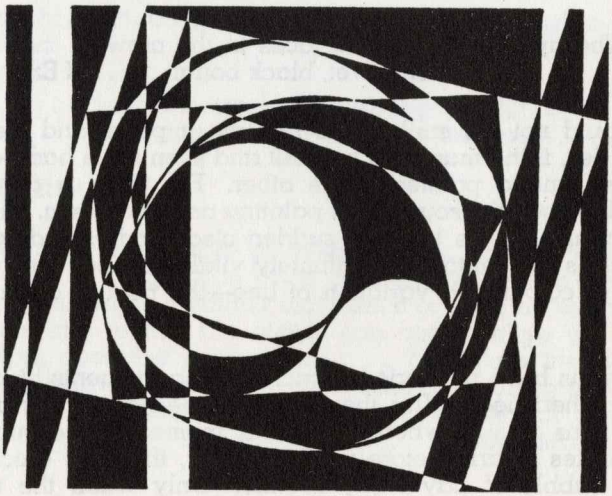
"The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough . . . . "of Ezra Pound.

But, could not the smile have become a poem and the crowd a painting? Yes, if the man who had felt and seen them had been a poet in one case and a painter in the other. For there is actually little difference between the source of a painting and of a poem. That source, the first impulse, is the intuitive sudden clear understanding of something which is momentous yet infinitely vital. The painter translates it to shades of colour and variation of line—the poet to a configuration of images.

Most of us have memories of such fleeting moments hidden away, but dearly cherished. Why then is everyone not a poet or painter? What happens to you when in a lucid moment some such idea or memory comes clearly before you? Usually, they are quickly buried under the rubble of day-to-day routine. Only when the impulse is

strong enough to overcome one's natural inertia and when the ability to communicate and the opportunity of expressing the impulse are there, will such a memory or idea assume the form of a painting or poem. These elusive moments have to be worked upon, re-evoked, and given a shape and life of their own. Even then, for every success, there are many failures and mediocrities. Few men have the combination of genius and craftmanship to produce both poetry and art. The craft of poets and painters is their ability to translate their consciousness of life and their intuitions into media which can act upon others. A poet or painter is a fortuitous combination of genius, opportunity and the will to express this genius.

Art and poetry—this drive to express the inner reflections of the outer world—can be traced like two intertwining threads throughout the history of mankind. This impulse alliterated the incantations of the Druids; it animated the fetish statuettes of the Congo Negro and rose to the sublimity of the liturgy of the mass. Even today, when the trend is to systematize our knowledge of the sciences, intuitive knowledge defies absolute "scientific classification." It was this knowledge of something within us which defies reason that prompted the first men to rhyme incantations and to draw pictures. It still permeates through the rational shell of our body of knowledge in such forms as "The Waste Land" and "La Guernica".

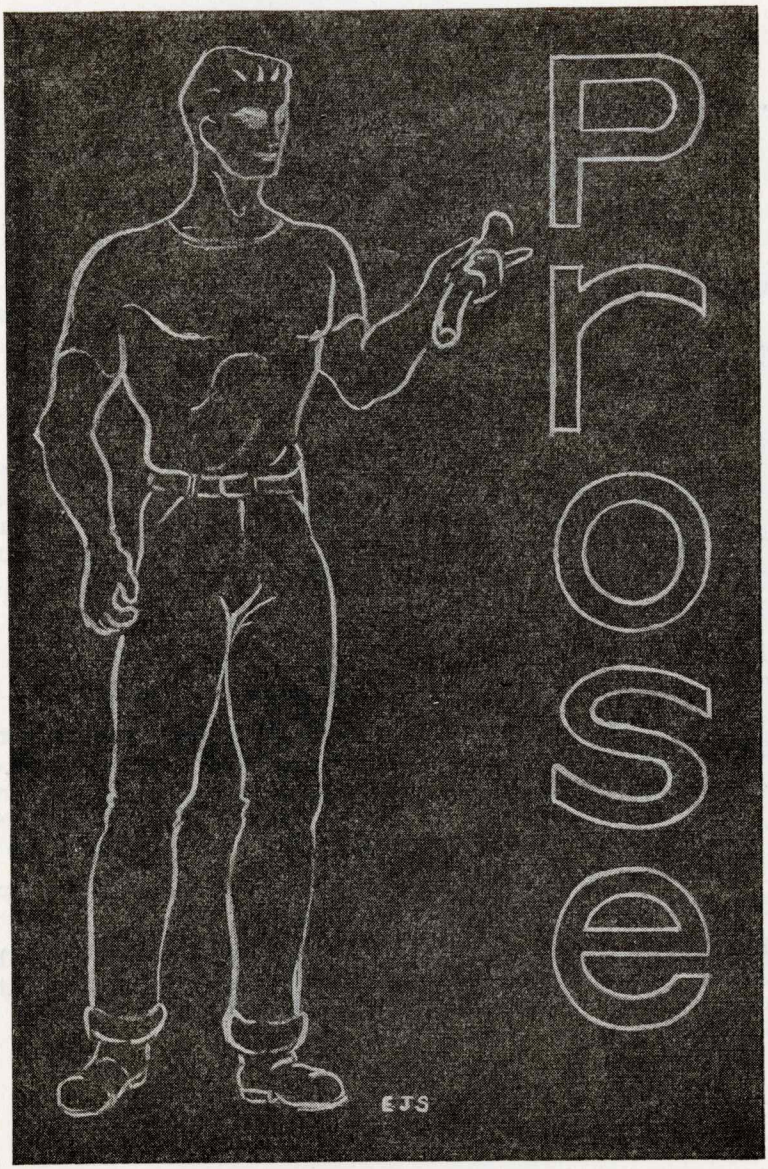


LIGHT AND PARALLELOGRAM **s. husevang**

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL — t. abramovitch

STUDY

j. finlayson


Prose
EJS

h. d. clarke

THE CROSS IS BENT

Cecil Banner was angry. His thick fingers drummed a steady tatoo on his solid mahogany desk. One hundred and eighty pounds of carefully nurtured massaged flesh quivered in its hand tailored English fabric covering. He flipped the intercom switch.

"Bill, bring me the Zenith file."

Banner relaxed, a pleasant expression came over his face. He examined his fingernails. The manicurist had done a good job.

A moment later Bill entered the office; he walked quickly across the thick carpet and handed the dossier to Banner.

"You didn't have to rush over Bill, sit down a moment."

"It's quite alright Mr. Banner, I knew that you would want the file right away. I think that I had better get back to work."

Bill retreated and quietly closed the door.

Banner leafed through the papers — Zenith was getting too big. As head of Goliath Industries he had to nip these upstart construction firms in the bud; otherwise Goliath would no longer dominate the building field.

He picked up the phone — dialed — and waited.

"Hallo Roddy? It's Cecil. How's the curling going?"

"Ha. I told you — you'll be a fine skip!"

"Say Roddy — you know that Zenith matter . . . . ?"

"Yes — yes — right. Well they're getting too big — cutting into the business — I want them out."

"Don't give me a song and dance. You heard what I said — OUT."

"Buy them or break them; I don't give a damn!"

"I know it will cost — I'll write you a cheque. All right, cash. Don't worry — it'll be enough."

"Well, get going on it. I'll handle everything here."

"Alright Roddy — we'll have to get up a game one of these days. Uh huh. Thanks."

Slowly he replaced the receiver — the drumming ceased and he smiled. He flipped the intercom switch.

"Say Ruth, come here a minute."

Seconds later his secretary, Ruth, entered. Ruth was neither beautiful nor plain — men would call her interesting. She stalked across the carpet. Her figure was perfectly silhouetted by the dark-green knitted dress. Banner thought her very interesting.

"Ruthy honey, I've done it again." Banner was bubbling. He snapped his fingers — the sound sharp and crackling.

"Just like that Baby, I crush them all — like a bug. How about hitting the town tonight Ruthy? The big spots — then go to your place for a few drinks — watch T.V. — you know . . . . "

"Well", Ruth hesitated, her mind furiously whirling, "I don't know Mr. Banner. The apartment is in such a mess — so dowdy looking. It really needs a new living room rug and the T.V. set hasn't been working so hot."

"How much!" Banner's voice ripped through the air like a cannon shot.

"What . . . "

"I said how much to fix it up — three hundred? Here's a hundred now." Banner peeled two bills from a roll. "I'll give you the rest tonight, okay? I'll pick up a couple of bottles — see you at seven. Oh, Ruthy, phone Mrs. Banner like a good girl. Tell her I have an important conference — some men from New York — make it good."

"Sure Mr. Banner, I'm sure we'll have fun tonight . . . "With angelic purity she gave him a heavenly smile. On the way out she stopped to adjust the seam of her stocking. Out of the corner of her eye she looked to see if Banner was watching. He was.

II

"I'm telling you officer, I wasn't going over thirty". Banner's face portrayed his innocence. His voice and actions clearly indicated that he was a wronged man.

"Look, sir", the police officer was young — too young, "I clocked you at forty at that last intersection, let's see your licence."

"So you're Cecil Banner! I am pleased to meet you sir, my brother-in-law bought a house from you last year. Likes it, too."

"Look officer I'm a busy man." Banner glanced at his watch. The solid gold figures spelled out seven-thirty." I'm late for an appointment. I'm sure you made an error — however let bygones be bygones . . . here's a tenner for your trouble. Take the wife out on me."

"You know I can't do that Mr. Banner", the officer protested — although his voice was not as strong as his words.

"Here, son", Banner fished out another bill, "here's fifteen — take it. Give me a call at the office and let me know how your brother is making out. I promise that I will be more careful."

"Well, alright this time Mr. Banner." He pocketed the money. "But be careful, the roads are very slippery."

Banner rolled up the window of the big car and slowly started off. He couldn't help saying to himself: "Sucker. Cops: they're all the same — give them a buck and they'll lick your boots."

The car picked up speed, passing other motorists. The speedometer read forty.

III

People swarmed through the department store. Smelly fetid bodies, pushing and shoving to get what they wanted. The air was heavy and dust-laden. Christmas shopping had begun.

"Just what are you trying to say?" Banner was livid. "If I say I want them, I want them — where's the manager?"

The salesgirl, mediocre at best, her reedy voice stretched to a shrill falsetto, blurted — "I don't know sir."

"Find him! Don't just stand there girl — go!" Banner's finger poked through the atmosphere. "And don't come back till you find him."

The clerk flew off like a rabbit.

Banner muttered, "Damn stores — they take your money — then don't give you any service. I wonder how they keep their customers? Where the devil is that girl?" He cursed silently.

The seedy-looking girl arrived with a man in a grey suit. His red tie had a spot on it.

"My name's Banner, are you the manager?". He wondered how the man had ever got the job.

"Yes sir! What seems to be the trouble?"

Banner bellowed, "I bought a dozen shirts here last week — paid cash. Where are they? You promised delivery in ONE day — I haven't got them."

"Well sir I guess that there has been a delay . . . " The manager was cut off.

"You are damn right there has been a delay — but I want those shirts — what sort of a place are you running here?"

The manager tried to soothe him. "Mr. Banner, I promise that you will get those shirts in the morning."

Banner seethed. "If I don't get them, I am going to take my business elsewhere."

Like an aroused bear, Banner rumbled off.

IV

"We think that you're the man, Cecil. Forceful — dynamic. A pillar of the community. We need a man with Christian principles — moral fibre. There's no question about it." The minister was emphatic.

"But an Elder!" Banner was taken aback. "I only do my best you know — try to support the Church — help out that sort of thing."

The minister put his hand on Banner's shoulder, "I know that you do Cecil, but you can do a lot more for this Church — be a leader — organize. The Board has selected you because you are the man to fill the vacancy."

"Alright", condescended Banner, "I'll do it — for the Church."

V

The congregation was hushed, all eyes were focussed on the front of the Church.

"Do you, Cecil Banner, promise to uphold our faith by moral actions and deeds", the minister intoned.

"I will to the utmost of my ability." Banner answered strongly — but his mind was elsewhere . . . . .

" . . . . and are you willing to give of your resources freely, for the benefit of the Congregation." The words snapped Banner back to reality.

"I am willing." Banner looked about him and thought to himself, "I wonder what Ruth is doing tonight? What a girl." His mind rushed through endless space filled with Ruth and others . . . .

" . . . . . an Elder of our Church!"

Banner turned — and saw the admiration in the eyes of the congregation. In him they saw a leader — a charitable man, honest, sincere. The new Elder, with firm steps, walked down the centre aisle towards the rear of the Church. His back was straight, his eyes had warmth, his thoughts . . . . were eons away.

"This should help business", he thought, "an Elder — of an important Church . . . . I wonder what Ruth will wear tonight . . . . . "

He walked down the aisle — a good Christian — a leader — a pillar of the Church.

joseph fox

RELEASE

The triple lines of cruel, twisting barbed-wire, six feet tall and twice as wide, marched across the desolate uplands. For fifty yards on either side of the grim fence, all growing things taller than the sparse grass had been cleared away, leaving the unfruitful land naked and forlorn. Here and there, in shallow hollows, the scant snow lingered, dirty-white and wet. Between patches of snow the bare ground, but thinly clothed with wiry grass shone black in the subdued light of shrouded stars and of a half-grown moon all but obscured by low-lying, misty clouds. In all that dreary scene not a living creature stirred, and the only sound that broke the silence was the sighing of the insistent wind and the occasional rustle of the grass. Silent and foreboding, the pitiless barrier stood guard against hope.

Then, as the moon slid behind the ragged edge of a denser cloud, the furtive shadow of a man emerged from the blackness of a clump of saplings, full sixty yards from the waiting fence. Stealthily, the man advanced across the bare ground towards the barrier. Once he stopped, his body tense and rigid, his head turning jerkily from side to side, as if he sensed an unseen, unheard danger. He made a convulsive movement to turn and flee, halted it, then slowly, hesitantly, moved forward again, inching his way towards the waiting wire.

He dropped to his knees beside the fence in a shallow depression half-filled with wet, grey snow. Frantically, silently, he began to claw and dig with his hands, scooping the snow aside and clutching at the gritty soil. Soon he was flat on his stomach, deep in the mire of slush and earth, his hands torn and bleeding from their unnatural toil. Sweat gleamed on his fear-distorted face and his breath was torn from his lungs in stifled, raucous gasps. As the moon emerged from behind its cloud, it shone on his staring eyes, gleaming with the intensity of effort. Once, when he raised his head, a grasping barb clutched at his scalp, while others tore his mud-soaked coat. The long, rasping tear of rent cloth froze him into a rigid shadow, tense and breathless, while the mad pounding of his heart thundered in his ears.

More slowly, with infinite care, he dug and clawed, then, after an endless age, he stopped again and carefully twisted his head and aching neck. He was under and beyond the second of the three twisted masses of wire. Resting a while, his forehead pressed against the cold ground, he waited for strength to flow back to his trembling arms, while the sweat turned cold on his face and his soaked clothing, damp and chill, clung to his steaming body. Then he clawed and scraped again.

Midway under the last of the three lines, with the wide concertina of searching barbs above his ragged back, his bleeding fingers met the solid hardness of a smooth, round boulder. Stark unreasoning terror clutched at him. Madly he clawed at the cold stone that barred his way. Then reason returned and, almost calmly, he searched for the end of the boulder.

It seemed many long minutes before his hands found only earth. Twisting painfully to his right, he dug around the stone, thrusting the loosened earth and mud behind him. At last he was beyond the threatening barbs, trembling on widespread hands and knees. His head drooped low, too heavy for his aching neck, while the wind blew his dirt-encrusted hair across his face. Slowly, a man full spent, he staggered to his feet.

For a moment his mind was blank. And then the realization that he was beyond the barrier broke through his fatigue — drenched his mind like a flash of lightning in a dark night. Slowly he turned and looked back at what had barred his way. But once more terror returned, and every shadow held a menace. He began to run, stumbling and staggering across the uneven ground. Twice he fell, struggled up again, and with labouring lungs and pounding heart, ran on. Reason had fled and nothing remained to tell him when it was safe to stop. Panic, sheer and stark, was master, and so he ran on and on, to where the land sloped downward towards the jagged edge of an abandoned quarry.

His body hurtled over the edge and down towards the dark cold water that reflected the stars of a clearing sky. Only the crash of his body as it hit the water broke the stillness that hung heavily and forebodingly within the walls of the quarry.

. . . .

At last he stood on the wide, free space towards which he had climbed. Far away, close to the distant horizon, he saw great fleecy clouds form and sweep with majestic freedom across a limitless sky. The wind which sang in the swaying grass had felt no restraint since it had been born in the gentle haze of far away. He breathed deeply, but even as his lungs filled and joy washed away the tiredness of his limbs, he knew that this was not all.

Slowly he turned and looked down the steep slope that guarded this free and gentle land. Then, his idle, wandering gaze, mildly curious and wondering, halted at a moving spot far beneath him. He waited and watched, as the moving form came closer. Long before his eyes confirmed it, he knew who it was, and marvelled at the ease and speed with which she climbed. Soon she was close enough for him to see her dear, remembered face. Her lips were parted in a smile of such pure joy and peace, that he felt his heart would burst. Then she looked up and saw him. There was no surprise in her gaze, only an ineffable gladness and gratitude. Silently he stretched out his arms. Without

effort or apparent haste, she climbed the intervening space with unbelievable ease and, at last, stood before him. For a long, long moment they stood looking deeply into each others eyes. Then, hand in hand, they turned to face the limitless freedom of the plain. The free and sweeping wind molded their clothing against their young bodies and swept their hair backwards in twin shining plumes. With their faces radiant with hope and joy they walked slowly towards where the clouds were born.

. . . . . .

Up from the dark, cold depths of the quarry pond, a solitary bubble wobbled slowly towards the surface. It burst with a tiny sound. Little wavelets spread out in widening circles. Some were lost in the far reaches of the pond. Others lapped futilely at the rock-bound edge of the water. Then all was still.

From behind the dark line of eastern hills, faint silver fingers of dawn stretched out gently to dim the stars. A rabbit rustled in the underbrush.

anonymous

OFFSPRING

The boy sat quietly on the stone steps, his huge blue eyes staring straight ahead. His over-large head was tilted slightly to one side, so that the noonday sun glinting off his blond hair gave him the appearance of a burnished statue. The pudgy, gray-haired woman in the white coat who was with him glanced at her watch and then turned her head towards the path which stretched between the steps and the road.

As though this was a signal, a stocky dark-haired man in a neat blue business suit pushed open the wrought-iron gates at the foot of the path and came towards the waiting pair. The woman bent down to the child.

"Your daddy is here, dear," she said.

The boy gave no indication of having heard her. His gaze appeared rivetted on the approaching man. To the casual observer he might have been an anaesthetized cherub.

The man stopped at the foot of the steps and looked uncertainly at the woman.

"How much time do I have?" he asked.

"About an hour," the woman replied. "You're a little late, you know."

"I'm sorry. I was detained," the man said.

The woman's face gave no sign of her thoughts, but her voice was gently reprimanding.

"It's too bad you can't manage more time, Mr. Nelson," she said. "It's been about four months since your last visit."

The man flushed a deep crimson and sat down on the top step beside the child. He took one of the boy's delicately-veined hands in his own and attempted a forced gaiety.

"Hi, Jimmy," he said. "How are you?"

The boy didn't answer and the woman noticed how the man kept his face averted from that of the child. She watched in silence as he let the boy's hand drop after a minute or so and then bent his own head down between his palms. The silent tableau held for what seemed like an age to the woman when, suddenly, the man's shoulders began to shake and deep sobs came from between his clenched fingers.

The woman remained impassive. The child just sat there listlessly, apparently untouched by the man's crying.

As abruptly as it had started, the man's sobbing ceased and he turned a suffering face to the woman.

"God! How much can I take?" he cried. "This isn't my boy! It's nothing but a vegetable!"

For the first time since he had arrived, the man looked directly at the boy. The woman noticed the revulsion creep over his countenance as he took in the slack, drooling lips and the vacuous stare in the innocent eyes. Pity welled up in her for the two of them — the man and the boy.

The man's face crumpled slowly and he mumbled something under

his breath. As though drawn against his will, he stood up and stepped down onto the path. Without glancing at the woman, he began to move towards the gates, stumbling now and then.

The woman moved forward to the boy's side and seemed about to call after the retreating figure. It was too late, however, for the man had already turned away from the entrance and was crossing the road beyond.

The woman's back sagged slightly as she knelt on one knee to pick up the boy. She held him gently as she turned and entered the hospital — the only mother and the only home he ever knew.

t. a. reisner

THE FALL OF GLOUCESTER

"Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall . . . "

Shakespeare, **Measure for Measure.**

•

"Not only do we at the feast of Christmas celebrate at once Our Lord's Birth and His Death: but on the next day we celebrate the martyrdom of His first martyr, the blessed Stephen. Is it an accident, do you think, that the day of the first martyr follows immediately the day of the Birth of Christ? By no means. Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men."

Thus, according to T. S. Elliot, preached Archbishop Thomas Becket on Christmas morning at the Cathedral of Canterbury, shortly before his murder. His sermon is not an idle one: it reveals, at once,

through the dual natures of suffering and redemption, the essence of all martyrdom and heroism; it expresses, though in different form, what Gilbert Murray conveys in his "The Classical Tradition in Poetry" /p. 64/: " . . . it seems that historically, the tragic hero is derived both from the Life spirit — call him Dionysus or what you will — who comes to save the community with the fruits of the New Year, and from the polluted Old Year, the **Pharmakos** or scapegoat who is cast out to wander in the wilderness, bearing with him the sins of the community.

. . . The emotion," Murray continues, "which the striving and death of such a hero rouses in the normal man must be far from simple. We feel love for him because he is a saviour and a champion; a brave man fighting and suffering to redeem those, who without him would be lost; we feel horror towards him because of his sins and pollutions and their awful expiation."

It is, therefore, in this dual nature of the Greek tragic hero in particular that the true essence of great classical tragedy reposes: and thus, among the models of antiquity, we find that Oedipus suffers for Thebes, as also do Eteocles and Menoikeus, Alcestis for her husband, Orestes for his father, Antigone for her brother, Macaria for her brethren, Iphigenia for Hellas, and Prometheus for all mankind. Whatever the protagonist may strive for, his strife, suffering and fall are almost without exception a burden wilfully accepted on behalf of someone else in an act of supreme self-sacrifice. In modern drama, echoes of such a conception of the hero are numerous to the extent where it is nearly impossible to determine how much of it may be imputed to the direct influence of classical thought and works and how much to the more elusive patterns of culture upon which the modern world has come to look as its own essential possession. Yet, perhaps, in no instance is the concept so clearly duplicated and the role so closely paralleled as in William Shakespeare's **King Lear.**

It has been intimated that even as Cordelia and Regan and Goneril themselves are, the figure of Gloucester is but an **alter ego** of Lear, sinning, expiating and being redeemed simultaneously with his king. Evidence in support of this suggestion is plentiful: for not only does the

story of Gloucester fall into the same general sequence as Lear's — one of misplaced trust leading to the late realization of folly and to doom —; not only do the appearances of Lear and Gloucester alternate regularly from scene to scene until the tragic suffering of both makes what otherwise might have seemed shallow and accidental, a deep and universal theme; but the very dialogue of the play offers by its acute irony no other plausible interpretation. We must remember that when in Act IV Scene VI Gloucester speaks:

"The trick of that voice I do well remember,

Is 't not the "king?"

his words are but leading up to the mad Lear's repartee:

"I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou
squiny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid,

I'll not love . . . "

The situation here presented us by Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of double irony. For not only do Gloucester and Lear successively fail to recognize each other, but their failure to do so results from the mutual suffering of similar circumstances and deficiencies. To the critical eye, the tragedy abounds in implicit irony of this nature — situations, wherein the characters of the King and his vassal are brought into subtle juxtaposition, until either by comparison or contrast between the two, the true depths of tragic suffering are sounded; until, in effect, the silhouette of one man's personality blurs and blends, to find a new identity in the other. It is in moments such as this that we find the blind Gloucester's vision most penetrating and most universal:

" 'T is the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind."

If then the presence of Gloucester is to unify, to accentuate and to universalize the main theme of the tragedy, what significance may his supposed fall from the cliffs of Dover be attributed? Or may we dismiss the incident merely as a clever though ineffectual dramatic device,

contributing little more than momentary suspense to the play?

Were it to happen to a minor character, or at a time of lesser crisis, perhaps so; as it is, however, so simple an explanation must needs rest on fallacy. That Shakespeare was anticipating, in the Dover episode, a major sequel to the tragedy is obvious. When Regan, gloating in the blinding of the old man, cries out:

"Go, thrust him out of door and let him smell

His way to Dover her mockery is impregnated with dramatic irony.

And Gloucester's dark purpose, here only hinted at, is not left unresolved. It is reasserted with amazing artistic restraint in his ominous question to Edgar, now disguised as a Bedlam beggar:

" . . . Dost thou know Dover?"

Henceforward, the action of the tragedy but follows the path suggested by Gloucester's speech, and reaches its natural culmination in the Fall. Suicidal as Gloucester's intent may be, it is absurd to suppose that his death-wish results from an instant of black, mad despair; not so, indeed. It staggers, from scene to scene, like a huge but natural avalanche, gathering force and impetus, tending ever, with all the horrible certainty of the purpose, towards its fulfillment and doom. And yet, we may ask, what resolution does Shakespeare offer us? Would it be at all compatible with his dramatic genius that a theme developed with such pains and at such relative length in the drama, be so supremely contradicted and annihilated by Gloucester's survival?

To this question, perhaps the Earl's own words imply the answer:

"There is a cliff, whose high and bending head

Looks fearfully in the confined deep;

Bring me but to the very brim of it,

And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear

With something rich about me; from that place

I shall no leading need."

These lines, spoken to the disguised Edgar, have a strange and very special significance. At one stroke, they expose Gloucester's motive for self-destruction consisting not so much in a riddance from life's "fitful fever," as in the wish to "repair the misery" of a fellow man at the price of his own life:

" . . . . . that I am wretched

Makes thee the happier: heavens, deal so still!"

His meaning is only intensified by the irony which so often does attend the greatest passages in Shakespeare: for the creature whose afflictions Gloucester will atone for is, unwittingly, his own son. There is little question that such a connotation was in fact intended by Shakespeare; it appears to be supported amply by the old Earl's last words to Old Tom:

" . . . . . if Edgar live, O bless him!

Now fellow, fare thee well."

Thus emerges here, even as it had two thousand years before Shakespeare's time in Greek tragedy, the heroic figure of the **Pharmakos,** redeeming the fallen by his blood.

Yet, the question still presents itself: how can Gloucester, we question, fulfill his expiatory and redemptive mission by leaping to certain death — as he anticipates—from the Dover cliffs?

For the answer, we must again depend on ancient Greece. According to a number of writers of antiquity whose works have come down to us, there stood near the Island of Mitylene, better known as Lesbos, the famed Leucadian Rock, from which the poetess Sappho herself is

reported to have leapt to her doom for the unrequited love of Phaon. From a Latin translation by Servius from the Greek Menander, we learn that following her example "came the custom now in vogue of hiring people once a year to throw themselves from that place into the sea" in apparent appeasement of the goddess Venus. Amongst other authors, Palaephatus, Photius, Plato, Turpilius, and Strabo mention the existence and use of "the expiatory fall" from the Cliff at Leucis. As Prof. D. M. Robinson reports, "the leap, legendary or not, was not suicide but a desperate remedy **killing or curing,** for hopeless love."

Is it not more than mere coincidence that the words of Edgar come into our minds?

"Why I do trifle thus with his despair,

Is done to cure it." Indeed, if Joseph Addison's "Spectator" /No. 233, Nov. 27, 1711/ may be relied upon as an authoritative source, we are led to believe that of those undertaking the leap only few — those utterly beyond hope of redemption — lost their lives in the venture. In Addison's account, the survivors, having successfully passed the ordeal, are reconciled to their circumstances and interpret their success as a proof of the favour of the gods.

Is not the attitude of Edgar a similar one following Gloucester's fall?

" . . . . . therefore, thou happy father,
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee."

Another ancient writer Strabo states in his account of the "expiatory Fall" that "sometimes wings or feathers were attached to the person jumping off the cliff at Leucis, so to lighten the shock" — a detail, whether factual or not, undoubtedly echoed by Edgar's speech again:

"Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,

So many fathom down precipitating,

Thou 'dst shivered like an egg . . . "

Unfortunately, our limitation in space enables us to enumerate no further similarities, striking as they may be; the question we must ask ourselves now is whether it is historically probable that Shakespeare was cognizant of the legend relating to the Leucadian Cliff. Granting that "he had little Latin and less Greek" and thus may not have read any of the works of antiquity dealing with the myth, there was an abundance of contemporary authors who expressed in their books an acquaintance with the Sappho-Phaon saga. Among others, Ben Jonson directly hints on this particular incident of mythology in his "Under Woods" No. 45, as also does Thomas Nashe in his picaresque "The Unfortunate Traveller." That these works might have escaped Shakespeare's awareness is a slender, but not altogether unthinkable, possibility; yet it would be utterly improbable to believe that familiar as he was with contemporary drama, John Lyly's play, "Sappho and Phao" presented in Court in 1584, would not have made a deep and lasting impression on him.

Be this as it may, the ultimate proof that Shakespeare stood under classical influence in portraying the Fall of Gloucester emanates not from trifle details nor from historical coincidence, but from the very content and spirit of the "Tragedy of King Lear."

From the account of Edmund's illicit parentage in the first scene of the play, through the self-reproaches of Gloucester, as the "lust-dieted man," to the very ravings of Lear himself, the hideous shadow of sex-guilt not only haunts and pervades, but creates, the tragedy. It is this theme that gives it overwhelming strength and mystical unity; and when the wronged Gloucester proceeds to the atonement of his crime, as did those who leapt at the Leucadian Cliff in propitiation of the Goddess of Love, the tragedy becomes as human and as universal as the ill he comes to expiate: original sin.

p. eric

THE NINTH OF MAY

In the cold hour before dawn, the city was strangely quiet. The reek of gun smoke from its tortured streets assailed the nostrils. It was the morning of the ninth of May. Exhausted, the city shivered with death and hope. Like rats, people prowled in cellars. Doctors silently moved about on their grimy mission of mercy.

It all had commenced a few days before, on the fifth of May. Victory was near. The heart of Europe was the last stronghold of the enemy. Countless ears strained as they listened to the voice of freedom. A whisper ran through the city, a murmur slipped along the streets, a shivering cry burst out in the squares, then a tidal roar shook the very foundations of that ageless metropolis. The people arose, once again to throw off their hated foe; the people, unarmed, but with the hate and fear of the last five years in their minds. They stormed the prisons, freed the ancient seat of kings, proclaimed freedom in the cathedrals and built barricades in the streets. For the enemy, beaten, yet trained to resist, rose like a dying beast in a last valiant, desperate effort. He was strong and the people were forced to fight with bare arms against machine guns. They fought with drunken courage, they seized the radio network, proclaiming that they, the people, had risen against the beast. But help was far away.

The fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, each held its long list of dead. Now, in the morning of the ninth, the city was on the brink of victory, and tired. Light slowly intensified. Barricades, torn telephone wires, ruins of houses, all stood like dark silhouettes against an awakening sky. Then a small column of smoke arose above one point in the city. Another, another and yet another—soon a hundred of them had sprung up. Voices came through the ominous silence. The tired populace rose again, for the enemy was taking his last revenge; he wanted to set fire to the city—but it was ancient, stone, and scorned their flames.

The sun shone suspended—red, bloody above the tormented city. Liberating tanks roared along the streets. Victory was complete. But the suspense of years broke, hate was unleashed, people changed to beasts drunk with victory. Gallows were set in the public square and the hated jailer was sentenced to die. Public acclaim dictated this. A crowd milled about expectantly.

In the heart of the city two children awoke. They slipped unobstrusively out of doors. The disorder and the tumult of the streets frightened them, but then curiosity overcame this fear. They crept along the streets, dodging the crowds, until they reached the square. Soon they climbed the fence for a better view. Just then a roar burst from the mob as the jailer was brought forward. He stood under the gallows. A priest, black and solemn, came forward towards him. The mob hushed to silence as indistinguishable words passed betweened the condemned and the priest. The knot was prepared, the eyes of the accused were covered. All was in readiness. Suddenly an eerie shriek of terror shot from the condemned man as he sought to plead for mercy in the language hated by the people. Unrelenting, people, who had lived for five years in the terrorizing shadow of this man, heaved a unanimous "no" at him. The knot slipped, the body slumped, the legs twitched—he was still. Silence descended.

Down the fence jumped two lithe bodies and squirmed guiltily from the mob. Silently, they ran to the park where they had often played. Arriving there, they found it deserted. Breathless, they stopped, A piece of chalk lay under one of the garden benches. Simultaneously, both children saw it. Diving towards it, the inevitable scramble resulted. Soon the familiar hop-scotch pattern trailed from the chalk. The children played, absorbed, only occasionally disturbed by the dim, distant, cry of the mob.

peter dyce

REFLECTIONS ON A COMMUTER

The alarm clock rang at seven-thirty. Scratching his head wearily, John rose on one elbow, then fell back tiredly in a complete stupor.

"John, get out of bed or your eggs will get cold."

He rolled slowly toward the edge of the bed, cursing, then changed his mind and sank back slowly.

"John, get out of bed or you'll be late for work".

With a supreme effort he swung his legs over the edge of the bed and pushed himself in the direction of the bathroom. Filling the sink with hot water, he lathered his face with shaving cream, muttering incoherently as he did so.

"Matched with an aged....."

.....

Through the train window he could see the dull, grey skyscrapers of the approaching city. And even in the pale, misty dawn, the city bustled with movements of industrious ants.

"Stormy, husky, brawling,".....cities of men and manners".....

.....

He placed his briefcase on his desk and hung his coat on the hook in the corner. Seating himself at his desk, he removed his papers from the briefcase. As he leafed through them carefully, he began to initial them neatly in the upper right-hand corner. Form 2F-32568.....Form 7F-86523.....Form 9F-56823....."How dull it is to pause.....in use."

He folded the forms individually and placed them carefully at the corner of his desk. Looking up from his work, he scanned the solemn, intent faces of the employees as they typed, dictated, filed, scurried and scratched. At ten o'clock a bell rang, summoning the giants and ants of the sprawling industrial establishments, to the quarters of lesser enterprises. Each morning this phenomona was enacted. The latter supplied the lifeblood of the former, and the former reciprocated in turn.....of course the agreement was tacit and not recognized as such by many. Chattering rows of secretaries, clerks, mailboys, receptionists, and miscellaneous others filed out of the offices and clattered down the stairs.

"Through soft degrees subdue.....good."

At eleven o'clock he laid down his pen, rose from his desk, strode to the corner, put on his coat and left the office.

John had been visiting his doctor regularly within the last few weeks. Recently he had been working very hard and very late. The president of the company had been urging higher quotas from all the salesmen. It was always the same. As sales increased, quotas would also increase. No limit was set. Stagnation is repugnant. John's doctor had warned him that unless he slowed down "a bit", he might have a breakdown. And so John was visiting the doctor to see if something couldn't be done without him having to decrease his output. Besides, there was a down payment to make on the new automobile he wished to buy. And the automobile, as everybody knows, is a very important social asset. So it was very important that the complications be resolved.

His doctor advised him to have a complete rest . . . "perhaps several weeks or so" . . . . . before he returned to the office. He also gave him some pills to take each night before he went to bed. John returned to the office that night.

The office was empty. The deserted desks lay in small, neat rows covered by bright new blotters. Over the desk of each employee hung a long, thin chain, which when pulled switched the light on . . . . . but only one light was on . . . . . John's.

The grotesque shape of the neon lights flashed on and off on the sleek hardwood floor.....The Latin Quarter.....The Oasis..... Buick.....Westinghouse television.....Adam's Funeral Parlor.

Outside in the street, convertibles and sleek, chrome-plated hardtops had replaced the heavy vans and speeding news trucks. Mailboys became playboys, secretaries became socialites and the janitor of the building relived old war days in the local tavern.

"Death closes all....."

.....

John arrived home late that night. As he slowly plodded towards his doorstep, he stopped to regard with veneration the neat, little rows of houses, the eerie television antennas and the cars in the driveways outside the houses. How perfect was Suburbia! The neat little rows of houses, each with its over-burdened clothesline stretching the entire length of the backyards.

When he got into the house he called his wife, but she had gone to bed. So he settled down comfortably in the living room soft chair to do some work. He was consulting volume three of a commercial textbook when a pain seized his heart. He tried to call his wife, but no words came out. Desperately he tried to rise, but life slowly slipped from his grasp. He fell back slowly in his chair, knocking the papers

from the arm of the chair. The papers slowly fluttered to the floor .....Form 2F-32568.....Form 7F-86523.....Form 9F-56823 .....perfect order.....

"The best laid.....and men".....

alex frith

THE NIGHT IS LONG

"During the day," Nurse Cobane reflected, "one could sometimes forget that a hospital **was** a hospital. But at night—never! Discouragement, suffering and despair pressed down on one like some heavy, all-pervading gas."

She thought of Mr. St. Hilary, always courteous, never complaining. But with that dreadful look of unaccepted suffering at the back of his eyes. She had urged him to call in case he coud not sleep. The light signal had remained dark. Yet now, at two in the morning, she felt certain that he had not slept at all.

Claire Cobane got up and gently opened the door of room no. 17. She stood still on the threshold until he spoke in his pleasant voice with the slight drawl:

"Come in, Nurse, if you are not too busy."

As Claire approached the bed, she asked: "Why did you not call, as you had promised?"

His voice suddenly lost its usual slightly ironical edge. "What is the use? You have enough people, necessarily or unnecessarily, demanding your attention. At night the nurse somehow seems the only

sane, really alive element in this place of horror. "Please forgive me," he added, "I should not have called it that."

"But it is just what **I** had been thinking," Claire replied, "at night it is all so dreadful. But when, at ten in the morning, the patients have been washed and have been served breakfast, have had their rooms cleaned, when the doctor comes and tells the one that the last X-ray showed improvement, the other that the cancer-test was negative and that he can go home—how utterly different the 'feel' of a hospital is then!"

Gordon St. Hilary lay silent for a few moments. Then, slowly, he said: "It is terribly difficult not to be egocentric when you are ill, as I dare say you have noticed. But when I think of these past six years in a prison camp, living only for the hope of a reunion with Jasmine—she is my wife— and now when I **am** back I get taken straight to hospital. Could anything be worse?"

"Yes," Claire promptly replied, "imagine there are some who, for one reason or another want to stay in hospital."

"But Nurse, surely that must be very rare?" Gordon asked.

As Claire's trained ear detected a very slight sign of awakened interest, she told him: "Look, as you are obviously so very much awake I shall tell you a little about that, if you like. Only first let me make sure that every one is settled."

Five minutes later she returned with a cup of hot coffee.

"Nurse, you must be out of your professional mind!" Gordon exclaimed, blissfully inhaling the aroma, "since when is coffee considered a sleeping draught?"

"Anything is which makes you feel better and therefore more relaxed. Elementary psychiatry, my dear Watson! Now then, while you drink this, let me tell you about people who **want** to go to hospital and stay there, without being sick."

"Perhaps I made rather too sweeping a statement just now, affirm-

ing that all such cases are tragic; especially as most of my experiences are from Egypt, where I worked for many years. It is a country which I love like my own and one in which comedy and tragedy are always curiously mixed.

"There is a hospital in Cairo for all those who have been bitten by some animal likely to have rabies. That is the anti-rabic hospital, incidentally listed in the telephone book, a few years ago, as the Anti-Arabic hospital, which caused quite a stir!

"You will understand how necessary such an institution is in a country, bounded on three sides by desert and therefore unable to check on incoming animals as has, so successfully, been done in England. Among the worst bites, though rarely leading to rabies, were those, inflicted by the camel. Apparently this animal has as good a memory as the proverbial elephant. It will wait any number of years for the chance of revenge, and then half wrench off the limb of his old enemy.

"However, one would come across all types of bites and the hospital was always overcrowded with men and women, getting a series of injections to prevent the disease which, once contracted, is incurable. These shots are extremely painful, yet the hospital must have had a record for the high number of 'fakes' striving to be admitted.

"At one time practically the entire male population from some small village had been admitted over a couple of months. This naturally aroused suspicion, as no rabid dog could have lived long enough to bite them all. Investigations revealed that a canny old 'fellah' was making a nice little income from 'biting' people realistically with a dead dog's jaws! The reason for the briskness of his unusual trade lay in the fact that, in those days, a bus would take the patients to another part of Cairo for their injections. To the fellahin, who are almost unbelievably poor, this constituted the one chance in a life time to indulge in a free trip to the big city of Cairo. A few coppers might bribe the driver into making a little 'détour' past the famous 'Saida Zeinab' mosque or stopping at some little road side café where everyone would get out and sip Turkish coffee.

"Just before the university examinations a whole batch of students usually demanded admission, pretending to have been bitten. It is a strange thing that the Egyptian, by nature a charmingly happy, easy-going person, just cannot bear to fail an examination. After the annual student nurses' exams, we invariably had the sickroom full of attempted suicides. Fortunately they were never very competent at it. So if a university student realized that his chances were quite dim, rather than risk failure he would settle for the injections."

Noticing that Gordon had finished his coffee, Claire remarked: "You know, we've had quite a series of fires here lately, started by patients falling asleep with a burning cigarette in their hands. That is why the rules against smoking at night are so strict. But it will be all right, of course while I am in the room."

Gordon thanked her. It was just what he had been longing for, all during those interminable hours of wakefulness.

Claire then continued: "A different kind of fake was a 'fellah' who came in supposedly to be treated for a camel bite. It was a very dirty wound and the surgeon decided to make a large incision in order to clean it up thoroughly. However the scalpel slid off the skin. The surgeon threw it down, muttering something about disgracefully blunt instruments. The nurse raised her eyebrows as she silently handed him another scalpel. Same result. Whereupon she drew his attention to a hard mass, beneath the surface. Sure enough—out came a bullet! Though confronted by this proof of his untruthfulness, the man clung to his story until the day of his discharge. Obviously his fear of the village bully, who had shot him, was so great that he dared not mention the man's name to the police.

"The poor man was only one of many who entered the hospital. The drug addict would manage to get himself admitted for some minor ailment and entreat you not to discharge him. There was no place where he could have his addiction treated unless he had himself locked up in a mental hospital. So his only hope of conquering the craving lay in the enforced abstinance while in the ward, provided he could stay long

enough. How one hated to see him go! Yet the street in front of our hospital day and night was filled by men and women lying on the pavement in the hope of being admitted some day.

"Another case which I particularly remember was that of the old man, dismissed from jail, after being locked up during the greater part of his life. I rejoiced with him at the prospect of returning to his village, the' beled' which means so much to every Egyptian.

"However, he shook his head. The manslaughter, for which he had gone to prison, had not yet been avenged. If he returned, the victim's relations would be bound in honour to kill him. Did this penniless old man, who had gone blind while in jail and who was completely out of touch with life have anywhere besides hospital, where he could be sure of bed and food?

"You probably feel that such things could not happen here. But I think that one finds human suffering anywhere in the world. How many patients linger on in hospital indefinitely who would get better in a flash and make for home if only one might bring them the message which they are waiting for! The erring husband—that his wife still wants him, the mother—that her son, whom she adores but from whom she is estranged, is coming home to see her. But if you have nothing and no one to get better **for** — how can you be cured?

"You will find the self-respecting old age pensioner, living alone in his little garret, crippled by arthritis. He — or she — can gradually no longer get around, take a bath, buy even the most elementary necessities. It does not take long to become dirty and undernourished. The look in their eyes, when you bring in the breakfast tray is —, is —".

"Something which makes nursing and going through these dreadful nights worthwhile!" said Gordon, gently. "Thank you, Miss Cobane, you have made me feel very much ashamed. And, at last, very happy. Now I feel sure that I shall sleep until breakfast."

As Claire returned to her desk, she saw the light signal of room twenty-five flash on. That, she knew, meant a big job of work to do. And she was late already. But never mind.

a. whittall

THE CONQUEST

To say that Jake was not a colourful figure would be a gross understatement. He was famous, or rather infamous, for his ragged temper, his ability to swear, and for his extraordinary dexterity in the handling of the brace of guns which hung with deadly menace at his sides. This skill had been vigorously contested in the past, the majority of contestants dying with a look of sheer horror pasted eternally on their features. The few who survived, thankful for their escapes, proceeded to vanish as quickly and as quietly as possible out of his reach. The steadily growing number of lawmen who had met quick death at his hands was Jake's pride and joy, for he hated the word "law" and all that it stood for. It was said that once, to win a bet, he neatly pumped four holes into an unfortunate's sheriff's forehead before the body hit the ground. Yes, Jake could be properly classified as a bad man.

His fame forced him to travel quickly, leaving a wake of blood behind him. Gunmen, who wanted to gain fame of having got him, tried — and lost. Lawmen, upholding their oaths died to the tune of his mocking laughter. A reward of ten thousand dollars was offered for him, dead or alive, but all who tried, failed . . . . victims of the belching weapons bucking in his hands. Jake rode on.

Of the many tales connected with Jake the most popular was the one concerning his last fight. It happned, as many things happen, on a fine Spring day.

Finding that the state in which he was proving his speed at slinging lead was getting aroused, Jake decided to cross the border for a vacation of indeterminate length elsewhere. He rode swiftly, and the sunset of the ninth day found him drinking steadily far across the State Line in the bar of a small cow town. Later in the evening, he joined some cow-punchers in a game of poker. He won quickly at first, but lost heavily as the game progressed. He grew more surly as the evening wore on. The game proceeded quietly enough, until, in desperation, he made a clumsy attempt at cheating. Jake was caught immediately. The accuser and the accused rose, their arms hanging loosely at their sides. The remaining partners cleared the way as fast as they could, ducking under the tables and pressing themselves flat against the wall. Jake's arm snaked down. There was a flash of light, a sharp crack. A hole appeared magically in the cowboy's forehead. He twisted around violently, and slumped down, crumpling soddenly on the floor, a look of pained surprise on his face. His innocence established, Jake bent down and grabbed the fallen poke of gold dust. Laughing harshly, he quickly strode to the door, unheeded by the stunned spectators whose eyes were still riveted to the spot where the dead man lay. He mounted his horse and was out of sight before the inhabitants could recover from their shock.

A year later, when the snow was just melting on the surrounding hills, he returned to the town of the fatal poker game. When he strode into the saloon, the animated buzz died to a whisper, and then vanished altogether. Jake glanced scornfully around, he thumped the bar and called for whiskey in a loud voice. A pasty-faced youth darted for the door. Jake drew, and the boy's hat fell to the ground with a neat hole in the crown.

"Where d'ya think y're going?" he growled. "Siddown".

The boy sat down.

The news of Jake's arrival quickly travelled through the town,

until it finally reached the august ears of the sheriff. Heaving a sigh, the sheriff stepped out into the street and walking slowly past shut doors and groups of silent men, entered the saloon. The deathly silence became, if possible, quieter. Jake, with his back to the door was enjoying himself at he bar. He stiffened when he heard a decisive "You're coming with me", issue from behind him. Slowly, disdainfully, he turned around, a confident smirk on his face. Then he blinked. A startled "Huh" escaped from his lips. Jake suddenly felt the heat becoming oppressive. His arms dropped limply to his sides. Bug-eyed, with beads of sweat running down his face, he stood there as the sheriff approached him, one arm outstretched. "Give me the guns."

Jake squirmed, his hands jerked once, and then fell limply back. The officer scornfully raked the paralysed outlaw with steel-grey eyes. A spontaneous gasp exploded in the stuffy air, as the watchers realised that their champion was unarmed. By now, Jake was shaking, his jaw a-jar. A steady hand reached for his guns, and he heard rather than felt the cold and final snap of handcuffs imprisoning him. The sheriff looked at him for a moment, nodded, and the prisoner silently walked out into the street, his head hanging low. The officer glanced back at the silent crowd in the saloon, smiled, and followed Jake.

Patches of snow glistened in the sun. A stiff breeze whistled through the streets, around the corners and past a group of old-timers. The fellow next to me finished his story and everybody was silent. Then, a squirt of brown tobacco juice was followed by a drawled:

"Yep, 'tis a wonder what a gal kin do nowadays."

There was a general nod of agreement.

a.n.p.

THE EVENING BELLS

The April day was drawing to its close. The pale blue sky was slowly turning mauve, with patches of pale yellow. Street and shop lights were battling with the bluish dusk, and a fresh breeze tussled the hair and blew about the coats of the 5 o'clock crowd along the Neue Jungfernstieg, bringing the saltiness of the North Sea right into the heart of Hamburg. Although it was only a few years since the choking smoke of burning houses had filled the streets, there were hardly any signs of the ordeal-by-fire left by now in the central part of the town.

I was slowly walking with the crowd, window shopping and watching the people around me. Drawing closer to the brightly lit facade of one of the biggest department stores in town, I heard some male voices sing. Five young men stood in front of a brightly lit expanse of plate glass, surrounded by a thick ring of onlookers. Five youngsters, dressed in a bizarre mixture of Wehrmacht uniforms and civilian clothing, patched and old, and with only five limbs and four pairs of eyes between the five of them. They were singing folk songs, and soldiers' songs of the kind soldiers make up themselves when they are far away from home, lying in the ditches and dodging death, and not the kind written for them to sing by some "higher" order. These songs spoke of love, of blond girls, of return, and if they did speak of death, they spoke of it in simple words of those who know it intimately, and not in hysterical, stereotype outcries of rear echelon tin gods.

The folk songs spoke of the sorrows and the joys of everyday life, and of going away to war, with a sentimentality which has nothing in common with the platitude of a hit tune. Life itself has written the lyrics.

The crowd around them grew thicker, and as soon as the five would finish one song, somebody would ask for a new one, and the more they sang the closer seemed the crowd to draw together, and the surrounding bustle of the street to fade away. All of a sudden there was a commotion on one side of the throng — the crowd parted and let in four British soldiers. The soldiers were young fellows, in their late teens, our for some fun in the strange town. As soon as they saw the singers they made a move to retreat, but the crowd closed behind them. The soldiers were obviously quite ill at ease, but they did not want to start pushing their way back and so they had to stay. Everybody was looking at them, eager to see their reaction at the sight of the memento of the war.

The singers, unperturbed, went on with a soldiers' song from the First World War. There was a feeling of mockery, of smirking, in the crowd. Then, the soldiers' song finished, someone called for the popular "When the Evening Bells are ringing . . . ", and the five began to harmonize. Their voices were very well blended, and as the sentimental yearning tune grew in volume, the whole crowd lost its tenseness and mockery, and reverberated with the ringing chorus. The singers must heave sensed the mood too, and their voices grew full with the overtones of the eternal yearning of the youth, rendered so utterly senseless by the broken shells from which the voices came.

"Move along!" The rasping voice exploded right in the middle of the crowd. A policeman was trying to make his way through, but the people would not budge.

But the spell was broken and the peaceful mood gone. We were back in the street and the fresh breeze seemed chillier than before. The singers stopped singing and were passing a hat around. The policeman began to disperse the crowd. Yet people would not move far away. They were watching the four British soldiers who were turning out their pockets in search of German coins, putting them into a beret one of them was holding out for that purpose. After a while, the soldier with the beret full of coins walked up to the singer on crutches who had by-passed them on his round with the hat, and dumped the contents of the beret into the old Wehrmacht cap. The crowd broke out in applause and then broke up. The bustle of everyday life caught hold of everyone. There was no time left to stand around to waste in sentimentalities.

The sky was quite dark by now. The street lights had won the battle. The first evening star sparkled high above, but people had no time to stop and look.

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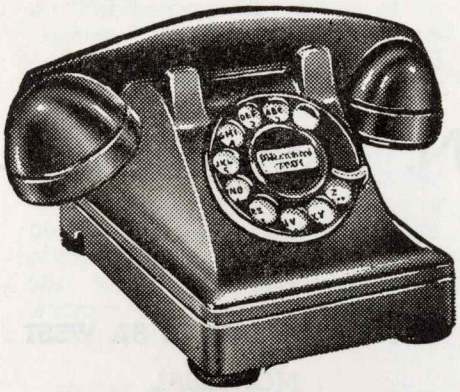

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PRISM

Historical and Technical

Statement

PRISM was founded as the Literary Magazine of Sir George Williams College on November 23, 1953. As a project of the Literary Society of Sir George Williams College, the magazine was first published in the spring of 1955. It was greeted with enthusiasm from the beginning and in its first year sold well over 700 copies. During the late spring of 1955, the magazine was divorced from the administration of the Literary Society. However, the magazine is printed with the cooperation of the Society.

The magazine is a member of the Publications Committee of Sir George Williams College and receives its revenue from an SUS ESA grant, advertising and sale.

This year response has increased to the extent whereby the addition of a section on painting became obligatory. It is the hope of the present board that this addition will prove successful and warrant enlargement in the ensuing years.

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